

**PROCEDURE 30 - Office Safety**

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## Synopsis

The purpose of this procedure is to provide guidance relative to the potential hazards associated with working in the office facilities. This procedure applies to all National Weather Service (NWS) office facilities and employees.

### **Initial Implementation Requirements:**

- **Analyze Site Operations versus Requirements of the Procedure**
  - Office Security (30.3.17)
  - Evaluate office environment. (30.5.2b, 30.3.1)
    - < Housekeeping (30.3.3)
    - < Storage Procedures (30.3.4)
    - < Filing Cabinets and Bookcases (30.3.5)
    - < Ladders and step stools (30.3.6a)
    - < Lighting (30.3.9)
    - < Noise (30.3.10)
- **Develop/Obtain Documentation/Information required for Site**
- **Designate Person to Administer the Office Safety Procedure Requirements**
- **Provide Local Training of Site Personnel**
  - Training on safe office environment. (30.3.1)
- **Inventory Material/Equipment (Procure as required)**
  - Hazard Warning Signs. (30.4.2b, 30.3.2d)
  - Ladders, Step Stools. (30.4.2b, 30.3.6a)
  - Lighting. (30.4.2b, 30.3.9)
  - Biohazard Containers. (30.4.2b, 30.3.13)

### **Recurring and Annual Task Requirements:**

- **Perform Inspection/Assessment/Testing**
  - Evaluate office environment (30.5.2b, 30.3.1)
- **Review/Update Documentation/Information required for Site**
- **Provide Refresher Training of Site Personnel (If Applicable)**
- **Inspect/Replace/Maintain Material/Equipment**
  - "Hazard Warning" Signs. (30.4.2b, 30.3.2c)
  - Office Furniture. (30.4.2b, 30.3.3b)
  - Ladder or Step Stool. (30.4.2b, 30.3.6a)
  - Lighting. (30.4.2b, 30.3.9)
  - "Biohazard" Containers. (30.4.2b, 30.3.13)

**Office Safety Checklist**

<b>Requirements</b>	<b>EHB 15 Reference</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Is initial and annual review of this procedure conducted and documented?	30.4.2				
Have all individuals affected by this procedure read, understood and followed the procedure?	30.5.4				
Do all personnel at this facility comply with general safety guidelines related to working and walking surfaces?	30.3.2a-g				
Are all aisles and passageways free and clear of obstructions?	30.3.3a				
Has office furniture been inspected/repared/replaced when damaged?	30.3.3b				
Are all office supplies and materials stored neatly and are easily accessed from the aisles?	30.3.4				
Are the guidelines concerning filing cabinets and bookcases followed?	30.3.5a-e				
Are ladders and step stools being used when retrieving objects above shoulder level?	30.3.6a				
Have "Layout and Furniture Placement Guidelines" been followed?	30.3.7a-d				
Are adequate devices provided to employees who work at computer stations, to prevent neck, shoulder, back, and leg injuries?	30.3.8				
Is adequate lighting provided to all affected personnel?	30.3.9				

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<b>Requirements</b>	<b>EHB 15 Reference</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Has this facility implemented guidelines stated in this procedure and NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure # 11, “Hearing Conservation”, to alleviate noise pollution in the workplace?	30.3.10a-g				
Does this facility comply with the requirements stated in NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure # 13, “Indoor Air Quality”?	30.3.11				
Is waste properly disposed of and containers properly labeled at this facility?	30.3.12				
Are all contaminated “Sharps”(syringes, blood sampling devices, etc.) discarded appropriately?	30.3.13				
Does this facility comply with the requirements stated in NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure # 5, “Emergency Action Plan” & Procedure # 6, “Fire Protection”?	30.3.15				
Are electrical safety precautions stated in this procedure implemented at this facility?	30.3.16				
Is office security practiced by all employees?	30.3.17				
Are office personnel familiar with the purpose and operation of office safety alarms?	30.3.18				

## **30 OFFICE SAFETY**

### **30.1 Purpose And Scope**

As part of its goal to provide a safe and healthful workplace, the National Weather Service (NWS) is promulgating this procedure related to the potential hazards associated with working in office facilities. This procedure applies to all NWS office facilities and employees.

### **30.2 Definitions**

Ergonomics. Ergonomics is the science of fitting the jobs to the people who work in them. The goal of an ergonomics program is to reduce work-related musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs).

Field Office. A Field Office may include the following: Weather Forecast Office (WFO), River Forecast Center (RFC), Weather Service Office (WSO), and a Data Collection Office (DCO).

Housekeeping. Refers to the maintenance of an area in a clean, orderly and sanitary condition.

Noise. Any unwanted sound.

Operating Unit. For the purpose of this procedure, Operating Unit includes the National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP), National Data Buoy Center (NDBC), NWS Training Center (NWSTC), National Reconditioning Center (NRC), Radar Operations Center (ROC), or the Sterling Research & Development Center (SR&DC).

Station Manager. For the purpose of this procedure, the Station Manager shall be either the NWS Regional Director; Directors of Centers under NCEP (Aviation Weather Center, NP6; Storm Prediction Center, NP7; and Tropical Prediction Center, NP8); Directors of the NDBC, NWSTC, and Chiefs of NRC, ROC and SR&DC facilities; or Meteorologist in Charge (MIC), Hydrologist in Charge (HIC), or Official in Charge (OIC).

### **30.3 Procedure**

30.3.1 The NWS offices may harbor potential safety and health hazards. These hazards may be minimized or eliminated by designing jobs and offices properly. NWS supervisors shall actively support office hazard prevention and control. Education regarding potential injuries, their causes, symptoms and treatments shall be provided as a method that assists both supervisors and personnel in creating a safe office environment.

Inadequate environmental conditions, such as noise, temperature and humidity, environmental pollutants (e.g., vapors from new carpeting, paint fumes) may cause discomfort that may affect employees' productivity. Measures shall be taken to reduce these discomforts to the maximum extent possible.

30.3.2 General Safety Procedures. All facilities shall comply with the requirements listed in NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedures 14, "Walking and Working Surfaces." Guidelines to follow include:

- a. Avoid carrying objects that might obstruct view.

- b. Walk with special care over wet floors or with wet shoes.
- c. Wipe shoe soles on rainy or snowy days upon entering the workplace.
- d. Implement use of “hazard warning signs” to avoid potential slips and falls.
- e. Securely fasten floor coverings to prevent possible falls.
- f. Utilize handrails when going up and down stairways in order to lower the risk of possible falls.
- g. Walk with caution over icy, oily or snow covered surfaces outside the buildings. Report dangerous conditions to management personnel to ensure that a proper treatment of walking surfaces is performed.

30.3.3 Housekeeping. Poor housekeeping may lead to fires, injuries to personnel, or unhealthful working conditions. The following good housekeeping practices shall be employed at all NWS offices:

- a. All aisles and passageways shall be free and clear of obstructions. The width of the aisles must be as outlined in paragraphs 6.3.5j-m of Section 6, Fire Protection. Proper layout, spacing, and arrangement of equipment, furniture, and machinery are essential.
- b. Chairs, files, bookcases and desks shall be replaced or repaired when they pose a hazard to personnel safety.
- c. Materials stored within supply rooms shall be neatly stacked and easily accessed by adequate aisles.
- d. Materials shall not be stored so that they project into aisles and passageways.

30.3.4 Storage Procedures. Guidelines to follow for safe storage include:

- a. Stack boxes in straight columns, with the largest on the bottom. When stocking shelves, keep the heaviest items at waist level to minimize lifting effort.
- b. Keep all aisles clear.
- c. Place wastebaskets and boxes where they do not present a tripping hazard.

30.3.5 Filing Cabinets and Bookcases. Filing cabinets and bookcases can be dangerous if arranged or used incorrectly. Guidelines to follow for their safe use are:

- a. Return drawers and doors to the closed position when not in use so as to prevent bumping and tripping. Do not open more than one drawer or door at the same time.
- b. Place file cabinets and/or bookcases where their use will not interfere with office traffic patterns.

- c. Secure or anchor file cabinets or bookcases taller than 64 inches to the wall to prevent toppling over.
  - d. In the case of four-drawer filing cabinets, fill the second drawer from the bottom before the others to weight the bottom and to prevent it from tilting or tipping.
  - e. Keep filing cabinet drawers closed when not in use.
- 30.3.6 Falls. Falling while attempting to retrieve items from high shelves is a common occurrence. When removing items from shelves, the following guidelines are recommended:
- a. Always use a ladder or step stool to retrieve anything above shoulder level.
  - b. Desks, chairs, boxes, and upturned trash cans are not acceptable substitutes for ladders or step stools.
  - c. Ladders or step-stools shall be sturdy and conform to requirements of NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 14, Walking and Working Surfaces.
- 30.3.7 Layout and Furniture Placement. The physical layout of a workplace and the furniture is another factor that should be considered when maximizing office safety. This includes the following:
- a. Position office computers and equipment near electrical outlets to minimize the use of extension cords and to avoid stretching cords across aisles.
  - b. Maintain enough room in front of drawers to open fully without obstructing aisles and passageways.
  - c. Place desks and counter tops near primary light sources to avoid eyestrain caused by poor lighting.
  - d. Position desks and file cabinets so their drawers do not open into a doorway.
- 30.3.8 Workstation Ergonomics. Musculo-skeletal problems may be encountered by NWS personnel involved in computer operations. Most affected are the neck, shoulders and the back. Other affected parts of the body are the arms and hands and, occasionally, the legs. The degree of impact on personnel can be reduced by following the requirements listed in NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 25, "Ergonomics."
- 30.3.9 Lighting. Different tasks require different levels of lighting. Lighting needs vary from time to time and person to person. One approach is to use adjustable lighting that can provide needed illumination without increased general lighting.
- Task lamps can be used to supplement the general office light levels for those who require or prefer additional light. Some task lamps permit several light levels. Since

task lamps are controlled by the individual, they can accommodate personal preferences.

- 30.3.10 Noise. The most common types of noise pollution in an office are generated from the operation of equipment and verbal communication. Noise pollution can decrease performance or increase errors when performing some tasks. Also, there is some indication that unexpected or unpredictable noise may have more of an effect than continuous or periodic noise. To alleviate noise pollution in the workplace, the following guidelines shall be implemented:
- a. Noise levels in all work areas shall comply with the requirements listed in NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedures 11, "Hearing Conservation."
  - b. Select the least noisy equipment possible when purchasing office equipment. When the choice is between two or more products of equal specifications, sound levels shall be included as a consideration for purchase and use.
  - c. Properly maintain equipment, lubricate and tighten loose parts that can cause noise.
  - d. Locate loud equipment in areas where its effect is less detrimental. For example, place impact printers away from areas where people must use the phone.
  - e. Use barrier walls or dividers to isolate noise sources. Use of buffers or acoustically treated materials can absorb noise that might otherwise travel further. Rubber pads to insulate vibrating equipment can also help to reduce noise.
  - f. Enclose noisy equipment, such as printers, with acoustical covers or housings.
  - g. When possible, schedule noisy tasks at times when they will have less of an effect on the other tasks in the office.
- 30.3.11 Indoor air quality. Air quality in all work areas shall comply with the requirements listed in NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedures 13, "Indoor Air Quality."
- 30.3.12 Waste Disposal. NWS personnel shall carefully handle and properly dispose of waste. For example, a waste receptacle containing broken glass shall be labeled to warn personnel of the potential laceration/puncture hazard. In addition, if any hazardous material is improperly placed in the trash container, the safety or Environmental/Safety Focal Point, supervisor and other office personnel shall be immediately informed. Further directions regarding the disposal of trash contaminated with hazardous materials shall be obtained from the Regional or Operating Unit Environmental/Safety Coordinator or directly from the local hazardous waste disposal company.
- 30.3.13 Sharps Program. Sharps (e.g., syringes/blood sampling devices used by diabetics) contaminated with blood or other body fluids shall be discarded in containers



immediately or as soon as feasible. The requirements for these containers are that they should be:

- a. Closable.
- b. Puncture resistant.
- c. Leakproof on sides and bottom.
- d. Labeled or color-coded with the appropriate BIOHAZARD labeling requirements.
- e. Easily accessible to personnel and located as close as is feasible to the immediate area where sharps are used or can be reasonably anticipated to be found.
- f. Maintained upright throughout use.
- g. Replaced routinely and not be allowed to overfill.
- h. Closed immediately prior to removal or replacement to prevent spillage or protrusion of contents during handling, storage, transport, or shipping.
- i. Placed in a secondary container if leakage is possible. The second container shall also be closable, constructed to contain all contents and prevent leakage during handling, storage, transport, or shipping, and must be labeled or color-coded appropriately.
- j. Reusable containers shall not be opened, emptied, or cleaned manually or in any other manner which would expose employees to the risk of injury.

30.3.14 Machine Safety

- a. All appropriate personnel shall comply with the requirements listed in NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 19, "Hand and Power Tool Safety" and Procedure 20, "Machine Guarding."
- b. In addition, employees shall keep fingers and body parts away from moving and/or sharp parts when using tools such as the following:
  - (1) Staplers
  - (2) Staple removers
  - (3) Scissors
  - (4) Hole punchers
  - (5) Paper cutters

30.3.15 Emergencies. All personnel shall comply with the requirements listed in NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 5, "Emergency Action Plan" and Procedure 6, "Fire Protection."

- 30.3.16 Electrical Safety. Electrical equipment used in the office (e.g., electric cords, extension cords) may present an electric-shock hazard.
- a. All personnel shall comply with the requirements listed in NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 3, “Safe Electrical Work Practices” and Procedure 4, “Control of Hazardous Energy Sources.”
  - b. Electric cords shall be routinely examined for fraying and exposed wiring. Particular attention shall be given to connections behind furniture, since files and bookcases may be pushed tightly against electric outlets, severely bending the cord at the plug.
  - c. Extension cords:
    - (1) Shall only be used in situations where fixed wiring is not feasible.
    - (2) Shall be placed so they do not present a tripping or slipping hazard.
    - (3) Shall not be placed through doorways to prevent the damage of the cord when doors must be closed.
    - (4) Shall be used only when properly sized for the job.
    - (5) Shall be taped down to reduce the risk of tripping.
  - d. When operating any electrical appliance or machine within ten feet of running water, a Ground Fault Circuit Interrupter (GFCI) shall be installed and the appliance plug shall be grounded.
  - e. Addition of portable appliances, such as heaters and microwave ovens, shall be cleared through appropriate management channels to ensure the electrical system can support the increased current load.
  - f. To avoid short circuits and fires, do not plug more than two appliances into one electrical socket.
- 30.3.17 Office Security. All personnel must be alert to the preservation of office security which includes prevention of unauthorized entry into the building and protection of outside facilities. The following practices should be followed:
- a. Keep unmonitored doors locked at all times.
  - b. Keep all doors locked during night-time hours.
  - c. View electronic monitors (if available) for activity outside the office.
  - d. Be alert to strange noises or activities.
- 30.3.18 Safety Alarms. Office personnel should be aware with the purpose and operation of safety alarms such as:

- a. Fire alarms.
- b. Smoke detector alarms.
- c. Generator fuel leak alarms.
- d. Power failure and generator operating alarm (light).
- e. UPS failure alarm.
- f. HVAC alarms.

### **30.4 Quality Control**

#### **30.4.1 Regional and Operating Unit Environmental/Safety Coordinators**

- a. Shall perform an annual assessment of the regional headquarters facilities or operating unit to monitor and promote compliance with the requirements of this procedure; and
- b. Shall perform assessments or designate personnel to perform assessments of all field offices to monitor and promote compliance with the requirements of this procedure every two years.

#### **30.4.2 Station Manager**

- a. Shall review, or delegate review, of this procedure on an annual basis to ensure that the facility is complying with its requirements. Confirmation of this review shall be forwarded to the Regional or Operating Unit Environmental/Safety Coordinator.
- b. Shall ensure that initial and periodic inventory of safety signs, ladders, step stools and other safety equipment is accomplished and adequate stock is maintained.

#### **30.4.3 NWS Headquarters (NWSH)**

- a. The NWS Safety Office shall perform an annual assessment of the NWSH facilities to ensure that the facilities are in compliance with this procedure.
- b. Requests for clarification concerning this procedure shall be directed to the NWSH Safety Office.

### **30.5 Responsibilities**

#### **30.5.1 Regional and Operating Unit Environmental/Safety Coordinators\***

- a. Shall monitor and coordinate to promote compliance with the requirements of this procedure for the regional headquarters, and field offices or operating units.

- b. Shall provide revisions, updates and new policies associated with employee exposure to and proper clean up and disposal of asbestos at NWS facilities.

30.5.2 Station Manager\*

- a. Shall have oversight over the implementation of this procedure, and ensure that the requirements of this procedure are followed by individuals at the NWS facility.
- b. Shall ensure that office work environment is evaluated initially and periodically for potential safety and health hazards.

30.5.3 Safety or Environmental/Safety Focal Point\*

Shall ensure that any responsibilities delegated to them by the Station Manager are implemented in accordance with the requirements of this procedure.

30.5.4 Employees

- a. Individual employees affected by this procedure are required to read, understand and comply with the requirements of this procedure.
- b. Report unsafe or unhealthful conditions and practices to their supervisor or safety focal point.

<p><b>NOTE:</b>    * - Reference WSOM Chapter A-45 for complete list of responsibilities.</p>
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## 30.6 References

Incorporated References. The following list of references is incorporated as a whole or in part into this procedure. These references can provide additional explanation or guidance for the implementation of this procedure.

- 30.6.1 U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, 29 CFR 1910.1030, "Bloodborne Pathogens."
- 30.6.2 Carnegie Mellon University, Office Safety. September 22, 1999.  
<http://www.cmu.edu/ehs/office-safety.html>. April 6, 1999.
- 30.6.3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Office Safety. September 21, 1999.  
<http://www.cdc.gov/od/ohs/manual/ofsfty.htm/> January 2, 1997.
- 30.6.4 NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 25, "Ergonomics."
- 30.6.5 NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 13, "Indoor Air Quality."
- 30.6.6 NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 14, "Walking and Working Surfaces."

- 30.6.7 NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 11, "Hearing Conservation."
- 30.6.8 NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 3, "Safe Electrical Work Practices."
- 30.6.9 NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 4, "Control of Hazardous Energy Sources."
- 30.6.10 NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 20, "Machine Guarding."
- 30.6.11 NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 19, "Hand and Power Tool Safety."
- 30.6.12 NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 5, "Emergency Action Plan."
- 30.6.13 NWS Occupational Safety and Health Procedure 6, "Fire Protection."

**30.7 Attachments**

None.